

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

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To: the Bolshevik Tendency

18 January 2025

Dear Comrades:

We send you condolences on the death of Howard Keylor. We remember the work he did as a supporter of the Spartacist League in advancing the interests of the working class. Howard worked closely with Stan Gow in the ILWU to fight for the principle of uncompromising class independence from the capitalist state and the capitalist parties. Keylor and Gow fought to end the divisive tier system, demanding "*Full A-status for B-men, now.*" This demand was a touchstone of the program of *Longshore Militant*, which grew out of Gow and Keylor's joint fight against the 1975 contract, yet another link in Bridges' long chain of job-slashing Mechanization and Modernization (M&M) betrayals. The ILWU membership rejected this sellout twice, and Bridges only forced it through on the third vote because many despaired of him negotiating anything better. In counterposition, Keylor and *Longshore Militant* fought for elected strike committees to oust the discredited Bridges bureaucracy. They waged a battle to fight for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay in order to spread the available work among all longshoremen and to abolish the steady man clause that circumvented the union hiring hall.

Over the next decade, *Longshore Militant* continued to counterpose this class-struggle perspective to the M&M contracts negotiated by Bridges and his heirs. Gow and Keylor were repeatedly re-elected to the Local 10 executive board, running on a platform that called for a revolutionary workers party to fight for a workers government.

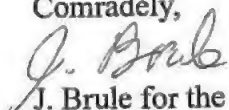
We had a political falling out with Keylor and he went on to become a founder of what became the Bolshevik Tendency. In that context, we wrongly slandered him as a "union narc." In fact, Keylor had explicitly attacked the ILWU's Coast Committee for accepting a deal with the bosses' PMA to allow drug testing of new hires and some other employees. Keylor said:

"There is a traditional union solution to the problem of brothers who use substances that affect their functioning. In the earlier history of the union, before Harry Bridges and his buddies surrendered so much union power and control back to PMA, the union handled such problems *internally*. But when our local tries to exercise union discipline as part of the effort to help our brothers overcome their problem, PMA has rushed in to stop us. Our union must reassert this right and exercise internal discipline and control."

What Keylor laid out is correct. Workers who are impaired can be a danger to themselves and others. It is up to the unions acting independently—not as part of a class-collaborationist "safety committee" with management—to ensure the health and safety of everyone on the job.

In light of this memorial and in memory of Howard Keylor, we are retracting this slander.

Comradely,



J. Brule for the Spartacist League CC